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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate the effects of the use of language experience and whole language activities in an early literacy kindergarten curriculum. The study attempts to show that participation in a language-enriched environment achieves results similar to those of traditional methods and basal reading programs in regard to the acquisition of literacy skills. After a review of literature on developmental language and whole language approaches, an early literacy curriculum was developed for the study population. Through the course of a school year, 16 kindergartners, all of whom were girls attending an all-day class at a private school in San Francisco, were evaluated through observations, samples of work, checklists, and formal assessments. Findings on literacy development showed measurable gains in letter recognition and printing, initial consonant sound recognition, word recognition, and writing. It is recommended that this model or an equivalent model be implemented in kindergarten classrooms with larger class sizes, in coeducational settings, and with a range of student economic levels so that positive effects of language experience and whole language approaches in the early literacy curriculum can be verified. Nearly 40 references are cited. Related materials, such as assessment instruments, are appended. (Author/RH)

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Title: Early Literacy Curriculum: Utilizing Language Experience and Whole Language in Kindergarten

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Abstract:

This study was designed to investigate the effects of using language experience and whole language activities as part of an early literacy curriculum with kindergartners. While reading and writing skills are being taught in kindergarten programs using traditional methods, basal reading programs and workbooks, this study attempts to show that participation in a language enriched environment achieves similiar results in the acquisition of literacy skills. After a review of literature on developmental, language experience and whole language approaches, an early literacy curriculum was developed for the study population which included, classroom organization, instructional materials, and teaching methods. Throughout the course of the school year, kindergartners were evaluated through observations, samples of work, checklists and formal assessments. While the information and data collected in this study shows favorable results in the development of early literacy skills, it is recommended that this model or an equivalent model be implemented in kindergarten classrooms with larger class size, coeducational setting, and a range of socioeconomic levels, to verify the positive effects of language experience and whole language approaches in early literacy curriculum.

Descriptors including, but not limited to:
Early Literacy Curriculum; Language Experience; Whole Language;

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Introduction

In the mid 1980's, public attention has focused on the education of preschool and kindergarten age children. Issues have been raised concerning curriculum and teaching techniques. The entire November 1986 issue of Educational Leadership, the journal of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), contained articles on the topic of "The Young Child At School". Issues covered included: early childhood education; developmental programs; kindergarten children; school screening and school readiness; and parents involvement.

Organizations such as National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the International Reading Association have published journal articles and literature which support developmental programs for early childhood education. Keynote speakers and lecturers at conferences sponsored by the NAEYC and local affiliate chapters have addressed the issue of teaching a filtered down program of primary grades in the early years.

Day and Drake (1986), state a philosophy for developmental early childhood education is "...that each child is unique and needs a flexible program to develop as an individual and that interacting and understanding, and cooperating in a group are fundamental requirements of society. Developmental programs allow for a flexible and varied curriculum designed to meet a broad range of developmental, socioeconomic, and cultural needs". Day and Drake point out that developmental classrooms place the focus on teaching the whole child.

The focus of early childhood programs should be upon the development of

the whole child. A kindergarten program must not only support the intellectual development, but, also the social, emotional, and physical development of the child. While children in a kindergarten classroom may be of the same age, there may be differences in their developmental levels. Webster (1986) states that the challenge of educators is "to support the kindergarten's child intellectual growth as part of the child's total being, remembering the child is a *whole* person. And every kindergarten teacher needs to care enough to say to those who will listen, 'I teach the child, not the subjects!' (p. 111).

More emphasis is being placed on teaching skills to the kindergarten child rather than allowing the child to experience learning. Increasingly, the teaching of language arts skills is finding its place in kindergarten programs. The needs of the whole child can be met in a developmental program which mirrors the image of the "...kindergartens of yesteryear, where they were a child's first school experience and where songs, molding clay, playing house, recognizing colors and learning how to get along made up the school day" Curtis (p. 4).

While reading and writing skills are being taught in kindergarten programs using traditional methods and workbooks, this study attempts to show that participation in a language enriched environment, designed to meet the needs of the whole child, can be as effective, if not more so, than an academic approach. This study will examine the effects of an early literacy program on the reading and writing abilities of kindergarten students. The study also attempts to show that an early literacy program can provide developmentally appropriate "hands on" language experiences for kindergarten students during a school year.

Statement of the Problem

This study was designed to determine whether kindergarten students who participate in an early literacy program, using language experience recommended by Allen (1976) and whole language actitivites (Goodman, 1986) progress along a continuum in developing early literacy skills.

Definitions

1. Early Literacy Program - An early literacy program includes all aspects in the teaching of language arts. Students are exposed to speaking, listening, writing and reading. An early literacy program was designed for the kindergarten students in this study. The field study model includes the classroom environment - use of learning centers; the teacher's role as a facilitator; and the active participation of the students.

2. Language Experience Approach (LEA) - The definition of LEA for teaching reading is a method in which instruction is built upon the use of reading materials created by writing down children's spoken language. The student-created reading materials represent both the experiences and the language patterns of the learner. The communication processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are integrated in language arts and reading instruction (Hall, 1978).

3. Whole Language - Whole language supports a holistic approach to language instruction. A whole language approach uses the real materials in the language(s) of the learners. Literacy development integrates these processes: learning, in the context of reading, and writing real language, to use just enough print, language structure, and meaning, and to keep it all in the proper personal and cultural perspective (Goodman 1986).

Review of Literature

The literature reviewed for this study includes information on three curriculum models, developmental programs; language experience approach; and whole language. A discussion of each model includes definitions, characteristics, materials and methods of instruction.

Developmental Programs

Webster (1986) takes a historical look at kindergarten programs from the 1950's, 1960's, 1970's to the 1980's. Webster describes a visit to a classroom during the 1983-4 school year, where the daily schedule was full with short subject-matter periods. "It is a day that moves along very quickly. Most children easily adapt to the pace. It is the 80's" (p.110). Webster notes a disturbing trend that "educators view kindergarten as a necessary downward extension of elementary school. That includes subject-matter periods for the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics... It is alarming to see kindergarten take on more and more of the characteristics of first grade" (pp 110-11).

Elkind (1981), writes about inappropriate practices in education: "When school is looked upon as an assembly line, and children are empty vessels to be filled, there is a temptation to speed up the assembly line, to increase production. Why not put in as much in kindergarten as in first grade? Why not teach fourth grade math at grade two?..." (p. 48).

Elkind (1986) states, "Education is being conceived of as a race and if you start early, you'll win the race...It is stressful for children". The article goes on to say, "Elkind's organization has adopted a strong position urging that pre-schools reduce their emphasis on teacher-oriented academic lessons and

allow children to learn in a less stressful environment by initiating their own activities, talking to people and solving problems, such as balancing blocks or putting together puzzles" (p. 10).

"A Time To Grow... A Plea for Developmental Readiness" (1984) is a booklet written and published by six directors of preschool programs in Contra Costa County, California. This 14 page booklet documents research and observation of young children and offers a statement of philosophy in support of developmental programs. The introductory letter to child advocates includes:

"Pressure to achieve and compete is being placed on children before they are developmentally ready. We advocate programs which are appropriate for each developmental level, thus allowing each child the opportunity for success and positive self-esteem. These qualities will enable children to be lifelong learners and fulfilled adults."

Brashers, et. al (1984) identify the task of the educator as providing a "safe and stimulating environment with a wide variety of experiences which will give the child materials to encourage and discover answers to questions. Early childhood educators supervise learning rather than "teach" or lecture. Materials are offered for multisensory, active experience. Appropriate space and time for self-discovery is allowed. A "hands-on" approach to learning is essential... Focus should be placed upon the learning process - an excitement toward learning, discovering, and manipulating various materials - rather than test scores, memorized facts and reams of busy work" (p. 5).

The Northeast Foundation for Children (1986) reveals characteristics of the kindergarten age child based on the research of child psychologists Gesell, Piaget, and Erikson (see Appendix A). The Northeast Foundation for Children recommends that the classroom environment and materials (see

Appendix B) should be organized to meet the developmental needs of the children.

The classroom environment of the developmental kindergarten classroom (see Figure 1) at Greenfield Center School in Massachussetts, laboratory school for the Northeast Foundation for Children has been arranged to meet the developmental and behavioral characteristics of the kindergarten age child (see Appendix C and D).

The teacher of a developmental program such as the kindergarten classroom of the Greenfield Center School is seen as an architect, builder, nurturer (Northeast Foundation for Children, 1986). The teacher takes an interactive role with the students by creating a language enriched environment using their contributions. The teacher may:

.write labels for areas of the room

.write daily chart of day, date, weather, activities to happen with children (sevens can begin to help with writing)

.write children's news on charts

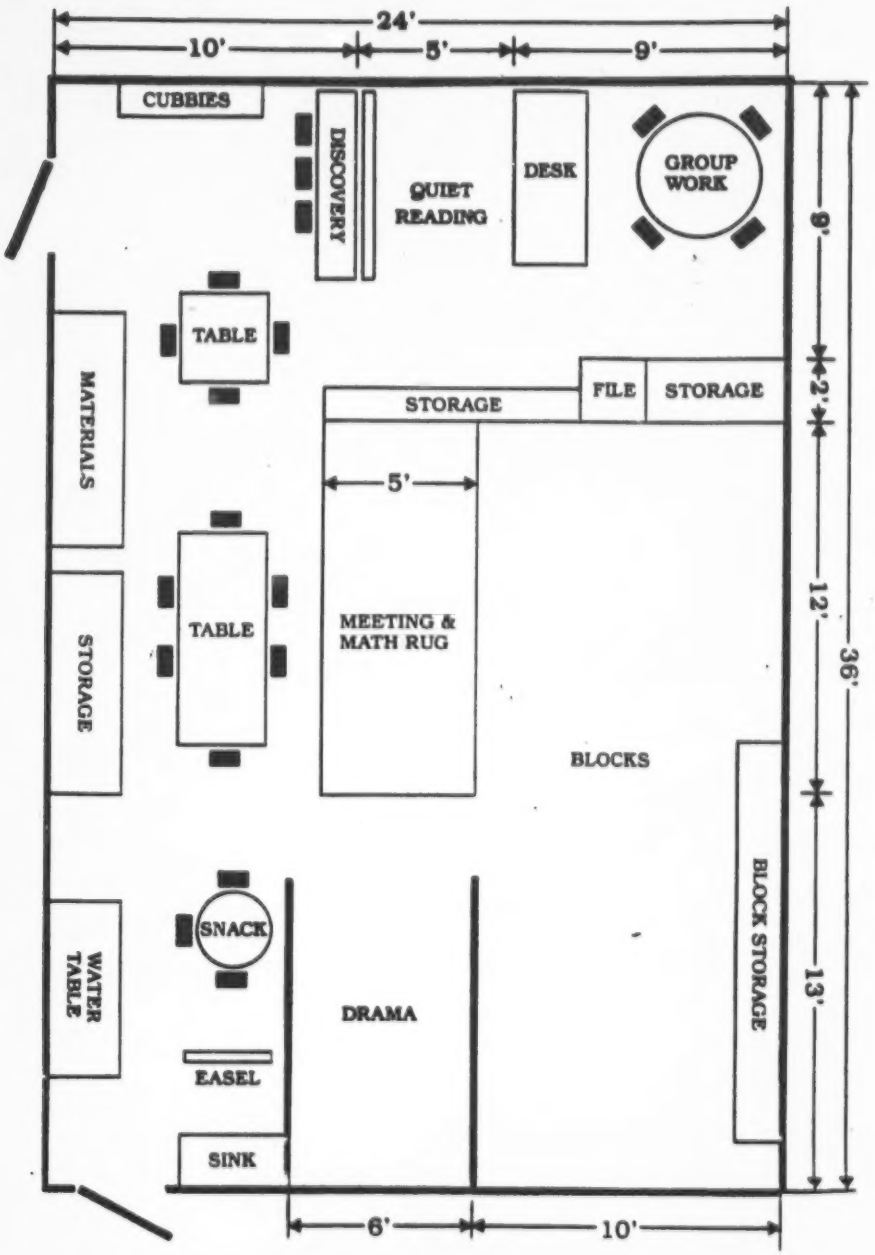
.write favorite poems, play word games

.write simple directions for games and art or science projects with words and pictures

.write children's dictated stories

.make individual books of favorite stories or rhymes (p. 40)

Figure 1. Floor plan of Kindergarten classroom at Greenfield Center School



Note: From

A Notebook for Teachers: Making Changes the Elementary Curriculum (p. 29) by Northeast Foundation for Children, 1986, Massachusetts: Northeast Foundation for Children.

In developmental programs, language and writing is supported by an integrated approach rather than isolated as separate content areas integrated reading and writing instruction for the 5 to 7 year old includes language experience activities and writing. Students are encouraged to:

.label block buildings, paintings and drawings, clay and LEGO® constructions in their own writing

.choose a word for the day from own experience or interest - word goes onto class word ring, is used in sentences, has rhymes made with it, has sounds found in it, games played with it

.draw or do art projects for making a class book

.record own stories on tape for listening center (p. 41)

Ellermeyer (1988) stresses the importance of providing a developmentally appropriate kindergarten reading program. She advocates providing kindergarteners with a language rich environment including books, magazines, charts, maps, paper, pencils, crayons, chalk and paint. Learning centers build upon language acquisition as kindergarteners engage in creative dramatics with puppets and role playing; rhyming activities and language experience charts and stories. A successful kindergarten reading program provides learning opportunities for students rather than formal teaching of reading skills.

Ellermeyer believes that kindergarten reading programs should:

1) be structured but not formal,

2) be developmentally appropriate, keeping in mind the learning styles of young children,

3) focus upon broadening each child's experiential base,

4) foster each child's desire to become literate, and

5) provide an environment rich in printed materials, materials with which to print (paper, pencils, chalk, crayons), and language experiences which emphasis meaning instead of skill development" (p. 402).

Language Experience Model

During the 1960's Allen began to define what has become known as LEA in the teaching of reading and writing to the elementary student. According to Allen (1976), the basic ingredients for LEA are derived from all aspects of communication - listening, speaking, writing and reading. The oral language background of a child is a basic ingredient in word recognition; other communication skills branch from this one. In a language experience classroom the thinking of each child is valued, regardless of how limited it is.

Veatch, J. et. al. (1973) cites a prior work of Allen which offers five major dimensions of LEA. These include:

1. What he thinks about he can talk about.

2. What he can talk about can be expressed in painting, writing, or some other form.

3. Anything he writes can be read.

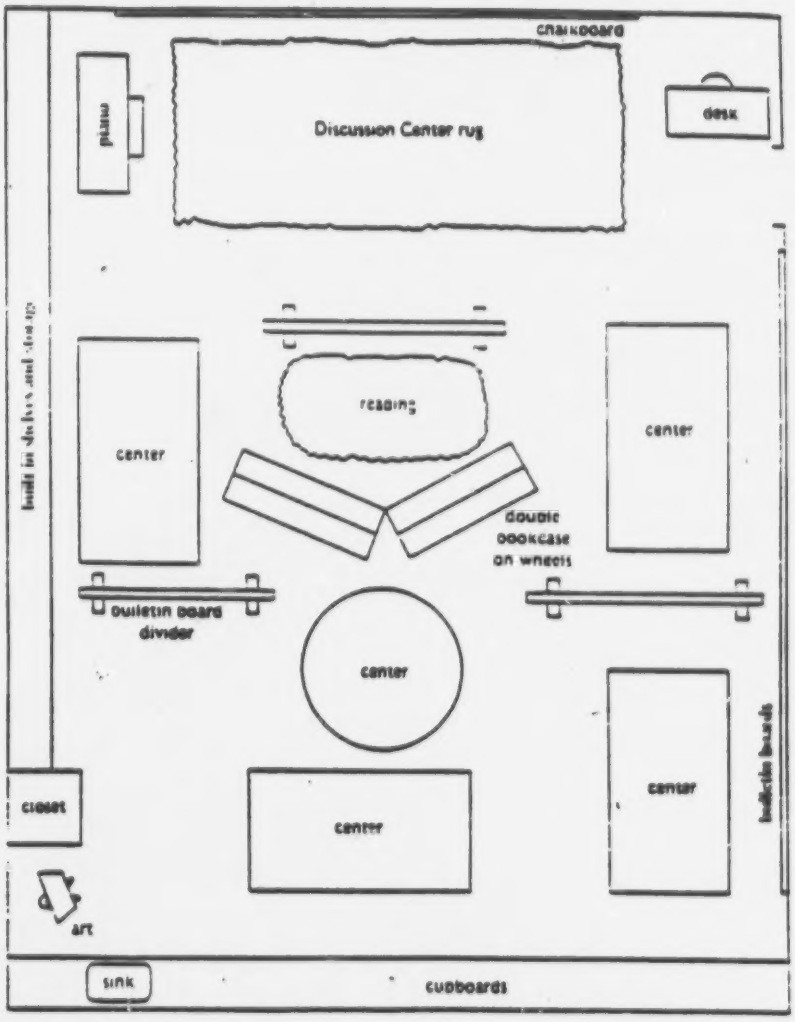
4. He can read what he writes and what other people write.

5. As he represents the sounds he makes through speech with symbols, he uses the same symbols (letters) over and over (p. 4).

The physical setting of a LEA classroom (Allen, 1976; Pflaum, 1978; Veatch, et al, 1973) provides an informal atmosphere which supports an integrated approach to a language arts curriculum. Sample floor plans (see Figures 2 and 3) show organization of work areas and interest centers which

engage students in learning activities. In this setting, students become active participants in the learning process. The organization of the classroom stimulates learning in many areas rather than focusing on teacher-directed lessons.

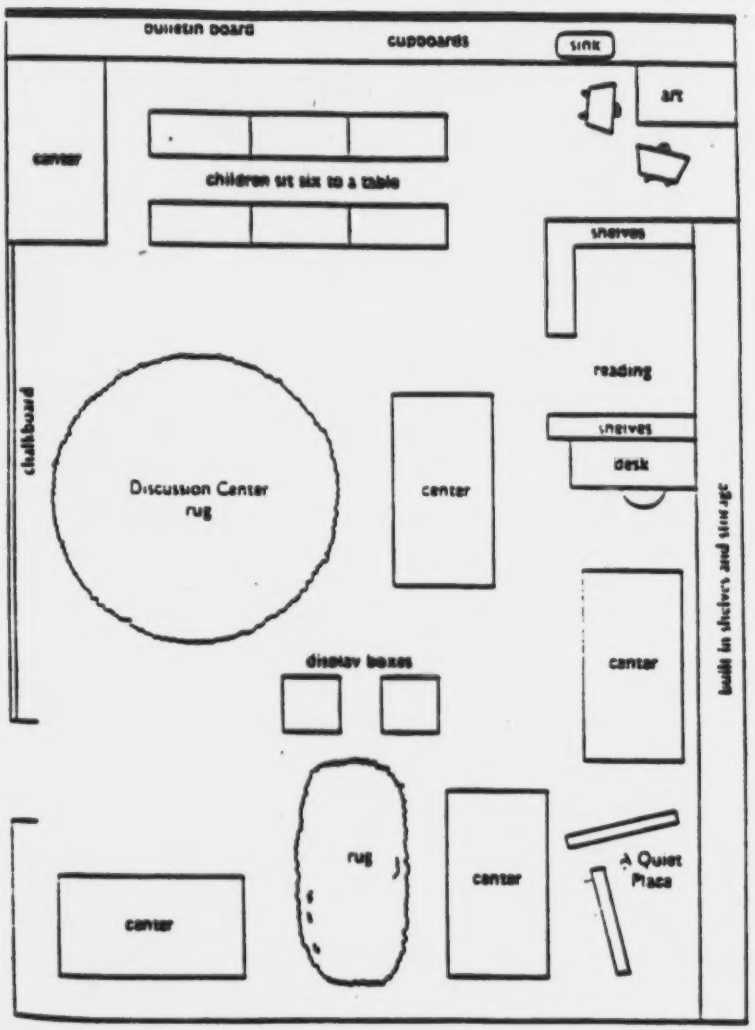
Figure 2. Suggested Floor Plan Utilizing Learning Centers



Note. From

Language Experience Activities (p. 38) by Allen, R., 1982. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

Figure 3. Suggested Floor Plan Utilizing Learning Centers



Note. From

Language Experience Activities (p. 39) by Allen, R., 1982. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

Typical ongoing learning centers (Allen, 1976, 1982; Veatch, 1973) include:

1) A Book Center - All library, basal, supplementary and reference books, including student written and illustrated books and magazines are kept in a book center.

2) A Writing Center - An ample supply of pencils, pens and crayons along with stacks of paper are stored in a writing center. Stamps, envelopes, index cards and student-size chalkboards invite writing.

3) An Arts and Crafts Center - A wide variety of materials including: paints, clay, colored chalk, crayons, watercolors, colored construction paper, scissors, paste, and glue encourage creative art projects.

4) An Audio-Visual Center - An audio-visual center equipped with tapes, records, read-along books, and filmstrips provide opportunities for individual and/or small group activity.

5) A Play Center - A typical "doll house" area houses dishes, clothes, furnishings, and props for dramatic role playing activities.

6) A Science Center - Objects for classifying, touching, seeing, and smelling are ideal for the science center. Investigation of items collected for nature studies can lead to new discoveries!

A sample of recommended LEA activities (Hall, 1982; Allen, 1981) include:

Experience stories - To develop a group experience story, students participate in a discussion and contribute their ideas about a selected topic, event or picture. The teacher records their ideas on a large sheet of chart paper. This is prominently displayed in the classroom. Follow-up activities related to the experience story can include: illustrating individual drawings;

looking for specific letters or consonant sounds; searching for high frequency words; identifying any patterns; and using individual words to add to word banks.

Word banks - A student's vocabulary can be expanded through an individual file or collection of words. Any words that can be identified by the student, whether from group experience stories, charts or creative dictation, becomes a part of the word bank.

Prereading - Visual discrimination, visual memory and auditory discrimination are prereading skills developed through LEA activities. This approach to prereading illustrates the relationship between spoken and written language (Hall, 1982).

In a LEA classroom, the teacher involves the students in language activities. The teacher incorporates students contributions from discussions for language experience stories and charts. By engaging students in conversations and recording their words, the teacher models the interrelatedness of spoken and written language. Veatch (1973) summarizes three dimensions of a LEA teacher:

1) The teacher gets the children to talk spontaneously; probably in a group or whole-class situation.

2) Some or all of the talk is written down by the teacher.

3) Activities of myriad sorts in talking, reading, and writing are developed. (p. 4)

Hall (1981) recognizes the importance of the teacher's role in a LEA classroom. She states "language experience teachers must believe that children can learn through personal involvement in situations requiring communication and that children's ability to use language effectively can be

developed through the use of their language as the base of teaching and learning" (p.130). The teacher's positive attitude and rapport with students contribute to the effectiveness of the learning process. Hall identifies essential attitudes of a LEA teacher as:

1. acceptance of each child's language *as it is*, not as the teacher wishes it to be,

2. recognition of the creative nature of this approach,

3. recognition of reading as a language activity that serves as a communication tool and integration of the teaching of reading and language (p. 131).

Machado (1985) lists features of the language experience approach as appropriate for young children:

1. its base in children's language experience and first-hand experiencing.

2. its stress on children's interests, experiences, and cognitive and social development.

3. its respect for children's need for activity and involvement.

4. its requirement for meaningful learning experiences.

5. its integration of school and public library resources with classroom reading materials.

6. its encouragement of children's creative writing as a meaningful approach to using and practicing reading-writing skills.

7. its requirement for self-regulated but teacher-directed learning activities (p. 293).

Giles (1986) compared the gains in oral language development between two groups of 1st grade students. The experimental group was taught

beginning reading by means of LEA and the control group was taught by the more traditional basal reader approach. Giles found that first grade pupils taught beginning reading by LEA made greater gains in oral language development when compared to the first grade students using basal readers. Giles concluded that LEA was more effective when used as a means of developing oral language skills. In addition, the conclusion was reached that the language experience method was more effective in the areas of language diversity and the use of vivid and colorful expression by those students.

McGallagher (1975) set out to determine whether lower-class students from a small town in South Carolina would have a greater retention of reading vocabulary using LEA to teach reading when compared with a basal reader approach. Sixty low socioeconomic first grade students were included in the study. Although McGallagher found no significant difference between the groups, she did find that student interest and attention was maintained more easily in the language experience group than in the basal reader group. The language experience students also exhibited a more extensive vocabulary than the basal reader students.

Stauffer (1973) also compared a language arts approach and a basal reader approach with first grade students. Stauffer predicted that students who had been taught to read by the language arts approach would demonstrate superior achievement in reading, creative writing, and attitude toward reading than students taught by a basal reader approach. Findings showed that the language arts students performed significantly higher than the basal reader students on all measures of reading achievement, except rate of oral reading, on the reading subtests of the Stanford Achievement Test. In addition, the language arts students showed a significantly higher attitude

toward reading and a more diverse vocabulary. Based on his findings, Stauffer concluded that students taught with the language arts approach will achieve better in reading and creative writing than students taught to read in a basal reading program.

Although LEA has been recognized as an effective means of teaching beginning reading, criticism is raised that LEA does not provide sufficient exposure and practice with basic sight words. Stephens (1977) concluded from findings in his study that LEA does provide first grade students with sufficient exposure to and adequate opportunities for the practice of basic sight words. The study also concluded that LEA is an effective means of presenting basic sight words to first grade students and that the presentation is equivalent to published readers.

Whole Language Model

One significant outgrowth of LEA is the whole language concept. Although whole language defies any clear cut definition Goodman (1986) enumerates several concepts which taken together, serve as a working definition for whole language. One key element of whole language is that language learning involves the student's own experiences in classroom activities. Goodman lists the following descriptors for a whole language program:

It's real and natural.

It's whole.

It's sensible.

It's interesting.

It's relevant.

It belongs to the learner.

It's part of a real event.

It has social utility.

It has purpose for the learner.

The learner chooses to use it.

It's accessible to the learner.

The learner has power to use it (p. 8).

Whole language supports integrated language instruction as part of the curriculum rather than teaching through isolated skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Goodman further states whole language teaching recognizes that words, sounds, letters, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs are like the molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles of things. Their characteristics can be studied, but the whole is always more than the sum of the parts.

According to Goodman (1986) the objectives of whole language are to:

Build an awareness of the function of print.

Create literate environments with functional print everywhere.

Encourage children to notice, use, and transact with print.

Expand children's sense of books and how to handle them.

Expand children's sense of narrative and expository text.

Expand children's sense of the style and form of written language (p. 44).

Whole language instruction differs from traditional language arts approaches in teaching methodology. Whole language is more of a philosophy rather than a methodology (Clarke, 1987; Newman, 1987). A wide range of techniques are employed to help the children attain the aforementioned objectives. Unlike basal reader approaches, there is not a written, published formula for teaching in the whole language style.

One distinction in a whole language classroom is the absence of basal readers, sequenced skill programs and workbooks for the reading program. The whole language approach advocates use of literature and other reading materials rather than published series. Whole language recommends reading good literature as an integral part of literacy development. In a shared book experience, the teacher reads aloud from a book, printed in a big book format, so all the students can see the illustrations and text. Students are encouraged to join in reciting predicatable lines, predicting what might happen next and drawing conclusions.

Since whole language is rooted in the language of the students, the environment and learning activities are designed to foster the inherent self-motivation to learn already present in the child. Several techniques are suggested for applying whole language in the classroom (Newman, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Rich,1985; Hajek,1984). Among these are: having the children see themselves as authors; using predictable books; encouraging inventive spelling; using and displaying student work; using charts and bulletin boards; interest centers; reading to and with children; and letting children play at reading and writing.

A whole language classroom reveals a student centered environment (Newman, 1987; Goodman, 1986) where students are actively engaged in the learning process. Learning centers are organized around topics and thematic units which facilitate an integrated approach to language processes. The classroom is a literate environment in which there are books, magazines, signs, posters, charts, labels and student made materials. Student work is displayed as an integral part of the classroom environment in the form of art work, creative writing, dictation, messages, class-made books, etc. Students

collaborate on projects and engage in conversations while they work in a whole language classroom.

Goodman (1986) also recommends lots of recreational books, fiction and non-fiction, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries and reference books be available in classrooms for student use. In a whole language classroom, students have access to raw materials which encourage language learning. Writing tools and paper in various sizes stimulate independent writing activities.

The Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) also recognizes the importance of writing in the language arts curriculum. By focusing on the process of writing (Caulkins, 1986,1983; Graves, 1983) rather than looking at end products, writing dovetails comfortably in developmental, LEA and whole language models. Recommended activities include:

Writing workshop - A regular time is set aside for working on creative pieces. A writer's workshop allows the process of writing to occur naturally. Students can develop their ideas through talking with others, organizing their thoughts, and putting it down on paper. These stories are kept in a writing folder.

Writing journals - Writing journals are personal to the individual. Writing in correct form is not an expectation of journal pieces since students are encouraged to share personal experiences in journal writing. The teacher may pose questions or make comments to elicit more information from the writer.

Literature - The reading of children's literature (Cullinan, 1987; Johnson & Louis, 1987) is highly recommended by BAWP. Literature selections should represent a cross section of writing styles, including wordless books as well as books with text. Books of many types, whether fiction and non-fiction,

prose, serial, fantasy, or drama expose students to an author's voice. By listening to good literature, students can begin to develop their own voice.

Rich (1985) believes that the whole language teacher is someone who chooses to work with people rather than programs. Rich identifies these characteristics of a whole language teacher:

"In whole language classrooms there is a sense of caring for children and childhood. Teachers engage with children carefully, cooperatively so as to help the children enter the literacy community.

Whole language teachers put the child at the center of schooling and learn with the children.

Whole language teachers know that using language helps children make sense of the world and of language. In their classrooms they arrange the environment so that children have opportunities for interaction" (pp. 719-20).

Clarke recommends the use of "real texts" as yet another means of encouraging language development. Real texts may be defined as newspapers, children's books, school memos, notes to and from home, etc. Children have a more positive experience with reading selections which they have selected rather than something the teacher has selected for them to read. Such real texts are not isolated from the child's everyday experiences, such as spelling lists, grammar exercises and basal readers tend to be. Clarke further suggests "the key to a successful whole language classroom is not so much in the techniques and materials used, as in the relationship one finds there - between children and their reading/writing, between the adults and the children, and among the children" (p. 386).

Several dissertations have been undertaken to investigate the effects of whole language in the elementary curriculum. Ribowsky (1985) investigated

the effects of using a whole language approach with kindergarten children upon their emergent literacy. The design of the study was a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest nonequivalence group type. Fifty-three kindergarteners from two intact classrooms were selected for the study.

The control group received instruction using a code emphasis approach, Lippincott's Beginning to Read, Write and Listen program while the experimental group received instruction using a whole language approach, Holdaway's Shared Book Experience model. Ribowsky describes "a code emphasis approach to beginning reading as occurring through a series of skills learned in sequential developmental stages presented primarily through teacher-directed activities" (p.2). In contrast, a whole language approach views early literacy as an integrated, meaningful process. "A facilitating and nurturing environment is thus seen as an inherently vital aspect of whole language teaching" (p. 3).

The major findings reported by Ribowsky showed support in favor of utilizing a whole language approach with kindergarten students. Ribowsky's findings showed that 1) the Shared Book Experience was a more effective program of literacy stimulation for preschoolers than a code emphasis approach and 2) the experimental group demonstrated significantly greater achievement in phonic analysis than the code emphasis group, even though the experimental group had no direct phonics instruction. In addition, the experimental group showed significant gains in language and book handling skills. The kindergarteners in this study attained emergent literacy within a naturalistic and holistic environment. The student's age did not prove to be a factor, as each student progressed developmentally at individual rates. Reading was seen as a socio-psycholinguistic process and bringing meaning to

print was the student's primary approach to reading print.

Powers (1986) used a case study approach to investigate a whole language model of reading in a first grade classroom. Six children each from two classrooms were selected for a seven month in depth study. One of the classrooms used a whole language approach and the selected children comprised the study group. The other six children were from a classroom using a basal reader program. These children formed the comparison group. During the course of the study, Powers collected information which allowed her to compare the reading and writing experiences of groups to their developmental growth and progress.

Powers found that the materials, experiences, instruction and the theory of reading held by the teacher greatly influenced the developmental growth and progress of the children's reading and writing abilities. Powers concluded that there are four broad components in the basic foundation of a whole curriculum. These are: (a) a teacher's theoretical model of reading; (b) materials used by the teacher will reflect this mode; (c) teachers need to have knowledge of the relationship between materials and experiences; and (d) the teacher's theoretically based instructional methods influence a child's development of reading strategies.

The language curriculum should reflect a natural and functional part of the whole curriculum. Rich (1985) states whole language teachers choose people over programs. They believe children are intrinsically motivated to learn, to make sense of the world. The atmosphere of the whole language classroom is one which encourages children to make choices, make mistakes, and learn the consequences of those mistakes. The children are empowered to become active participants in their learning experiences. Rich further states

"no two whole language teachers are likely to have identical programs although there will be a common thread running through every program. The classrooms will be comprehension-centered and child-centered, but the methodologies will be as varied as the teachers and the children" (p. 720).

The Subjects

The population of this study consist of a single class of 16 kindergartners, all girls, enrolled in a kindergarten program at a private school in San Francisco. The socioeconomic levels of kindergarten students ranged from middle to high income families. Students represented a diverse ethnic group with Anglo, European, Black and Asian backgrounds. The students participate in an all day kindergarten program with one classroom teacher.

The Classroom Environment

The design of the classroom environment and early literacy curriculum was based on information gathered in the review of literature about developmental, language experience and whole language classroom models. An evaluation of the classroom environment using "Check List for Kindergarten Learning Environment" (see Appendix E) developed by Allen (1977) offers insight into creating a literate environment. The classroom designed for this study incorporated interest centers (Ellermeyer, 1988; Loughlin, et al., 1987; Hall, 1982; Allen, 1981, 1977) as a main feature to facilitate ongoing learning experiences. Students had daily access to a wide selection of manipulative learning materials as well as raw materials to create with in the art, language and writing centers.

The interest centers available daily to the kindergarten students

included:

1) art center with a sand table - access to a variety of art media: paints, watercolors, stamps/stamp pads, markers, chalk, pastels, paper, wood shapes, yarn, pipe cleaners, scissors, tape, glue;

2) block area - wood building blocks with accessories for creative play (wooden family, props and road signs, plastic dinosaurs and zoo animals); paper and pens for signs;

3) doll house - dress up clothes, child-size furniture and furnishings;

4) science center - classroom pets, nature objects, sensory materials;

5) book corner - library books, classroom collection- paper backs, felt board, puppets, class books, stuffed animals;

6) computer - software appropriate for ages 5-7;

7) listening center - storybook/cassette tapes for 1-4 students;

8) language materials - purchased and teacher-made materials;

9) writing center - paper of varying sizes, colored pencils, crayon pencils, marker pens, stamps and ink pads, stapled booklets, magazines, scissors, staplers, tape, labels;

10) math manipulatives/puzzles - purchased manipulative materials: unifix cubes, cuisenaire rods, 1-inch blocks, geoboards and rubber bands, counting objects, puzzles;

11) creative drama - puppets, felt/magnetic board in book area; table top play sets (farm and village, dinosaur, farm animals);

12) snack/cooking center - snack table - Monday-Thursday; cooking on Friday mornings.

Early Literacy Curriculum

The activities decribed at the Greenfield Center School are a part of the many ongoing language and writing activities in the early literacy curriculum. The kindergarten students have many opportunities to engage in creative building projects and write signs for their projects; illustrate and contribute to class books, and choose new words to add to word banks.

Major elements taken from LEA include: experience stories; word banks; auditory and visual discrimination; and making books. Language experience stories are used two or three times a week. Students are encouraged to contribute words, phrases or sentences to the discussion. A combination of printed words and rebus symbols are used to record the experience on chart paper. Prereading activities to develop auditory and visual discrimination skills include letter matching games; alphabet, consonant and rhyming bingo; language experience stories and follow-up activities; and cut-out shape books for creative dictation.

Thematic units from the whole language model have also been successfully adapted into the early literacy curriculum. Class studies are generally scheduled for a one to two week period. Some units are extended depending on interest levels of the class. A thematic unit integrates learning activities across subject areas. For example, a single topic such as dinosaurs can be used in many areas of the curriculum:

1) to explore math concepts- size, sets, how many, dot-to-dot (1-15);

2) in language experience - brainstorming ideas about dinosaurs (see Appendix F), illustrating and dictating a creative story, contributing to a class book;

3) for creative dramatics - felt board cut outs, large plastic dinosaurs in

block area, small dinosaur set for table top play; and

4) for art projects - making a dinosaur diorama; tracing stencils and filling in background; making play doh or clay dinosaurs.

Another successful element of whole language has been the shared book experience. Using materials published by The Wright Group, kindergarten students can actively participate in read aloud time. "Story Box in the Classroom", Stage 1, is recommended for kindergarten and first grade. The series includes big books, classroom sets, listening cassettes, and teacher guides. Listening cassettes and mutiple copies of Read Together books are used with both nonreaders and readers. Two beginning level series of books are available for readers.

Methods of Instruction

A combination of teaching methods, as previously described, was used to engage students participation in early literacy activities. The teacher established a framework which allowed opportunities for students to share in decision making, initiate independent activity, collaborate with others, and contribute their personal experiences. The teacher's interactions with the students included a combination of whole group, small group and individual settings. By creating a student-centered program, the teacher was free to move around the classroom, join in the learning experiences, and observe the progress of the students.

Kindergarten students worked in whole group, small group and individual settings. Generally, whole group meetings were limited to morning circle, music time, experience stories, read aloud, and sharing time at the end of the day. Small group work facilitated instruction for math, language and

literature activities. Students not involved in small group instruction worked independently in the classroom.

The students were immersed in a literate environment where language experience stories, charts, graphs, labels, art posters, student work and messages were prominently displayed on bulletin boards, walls, doors and furniture. In addition, students actively contributed to creating a literate environment by giving dictation to a story, labeling building projects, helping put displays or bulletin boards together and making class books. The positive interaction between students and teacher created a warm, caring atmosphere where the joy of learning was evident.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether participation in a language enriched program supports early literacy development of kindergarten students. The progress of kindergarten students who participated in this study was observed, recorded and evaluated through anecdotal observations, checklists, and writing samples. The following tables indicate the learning potential of this group of students. Early literacy skills are included for printing of upper case letters, Table 1; naming of lower case letters, Table 2; naming of 11 consonant sounds, Table 3. November and March scores show an indication of measurable progress in early literacy skills.

Table 1

Gain in Knowledge of Writing Upper Case Letters

Student	November	March	Gain	Mean Gain
1	9	22	13	
2	22	26	4	
3	12	23	11	
4	25	26	1	
5	16	24	8	
6	21	26	5	
7	10	20	10	
8	13	26	13	5.06
9	21	21	0	
10	24	26	2	
11	23	24	1	
12	24	26	2	
13	19	24	5	
14	23	24	1	
15	26	26	0	
16	20	25	5	

Table 2 shows the gain in knowledge of naming lower case letters.

Table 2

Gain in Knowledge of Naming Lower Case Letters

Student	November	March	Gain	Mean Gain
1	13	23	10	
2	26	26	0	
3	19	26	7	
4	23	24	1	
5	23	26	3	
6	25	26	1	
7	17	25	8	
8	23	26	3	3.62
9	23	26	3	
10	20	24	4	
11	23	24	1	
12	23	26	3	
13	18	26	8	
14	26	26	0	
15	24	26	2	
16	22	26	4	

Table 3 shows the gain in knowledge of 11 beginning consonant sounds in November and March.

Table 3

Gain in Knowledge of 11 Consonant Sounds

Student	November	March	Gain	Mean Gain
1	1	7	6	
2	10	11	1	
3	4	10	6	
4	7	11	4	
5	8	9	1	
6	10	11	1	
7	2	5	3	
8	9	11	2	3.06
9	8	9	1	
10	4	10	6	
11	10	11	1	
12	10	11	1	
13	6	11	5	
14	7	10	3	
15	4	11	7	
16	10	11	1	

Students were asked to identify high frequency words, as listed in Dolch "10 Most Useful Words" as one indication of vocabulary development. The outcome of November and March scores are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Gain in Knowledge of Identifying Dolch "10 Most Useful Words"

Student	November	March	Gain	Mean Gain
1	0	1	1	
2	4	10	6	
3	0	4	4	
4	2	4	2	
5	0	6	6	
6	10	10	0	
7	0	2	2	
8	3	8	5	5.19
9	2	4	2	
10	0	6	6	
11	2	5	3	
12	4	9	5	
13	0	5	5	
14	0	8	8	
15	10	10	0	
16	2	10	8	

The continued progress in early literacy skills can be seen in the March scores. A mean gain of 5.19 was recorded for this group. With the exception of four students who scored 10 out of 10 correct, the scores in March ranged from 1 - 7. In contrast, November scores ranged from 0 - 4, with the exception of two scores of 10.

By mid-year, a number of students had progressed through two introductory levels of writing journals. Table 5 shows the marked increase in writing as a self-selected activity during a two month period, February to March. The scores include a total number from both morning and afternoon learning center checklists. In February, students writing entries in journals ranged from 0 - 15. The following month, students writing entries in journals ranged from 3 - 23. A mean gain of 5.43 was recorded for this group. Nine students wrote entries of 10 or more in March. In comparison, only two students made entries of 11 and 15 in February.

Students were also given a developmental spelling test (Gentry, 1984). Students performance on the 10 item test (see Appendix I) are reported in Table 6. The spelling abilities of this group of students ranged from pre-communicative to transition. The five categories reflect stages of developmental spelling.

Table 5

Gain in Writing as a Self-Selected Activity

Student	February	March	Gain	Mean Gain
1	5	10	5	
2	1	23	22	
3	2	10	8	
4	0	16	16	
5	2	5	3	
6	0	10	10	
7	8	10	2	
8	2	4	2	5.43
9	1	4	3	
10	11	17	6	
11	1	3	2	
12	3	3	0	
13	3	4	1	
14	0	10	10	
15	15	11	-4	
16	6	7	1	

Table 6

Performance on Developmental Spelling Test

Student	Pre Communicative	Semi-Phonetic	Phonetic	Transition	Correct
1	X				
2			X		
3			X		
4		X			
5		X			
6			X		
7	X				
8			X		
9		X			
10			X		
11		X			
12				X	
13		X			
14			X		
15			X		
16			X		

Since writing is seen as a process, students spelling attempts reflect developmental levels. All students in this group exhibited an ability to use consonants in spelling words on the test. Vowel confusion appeared

consistently in words attempted by the students using phonetic spellings.

Table 7 shows the frequency in use of Dolch "Ten Most Useful Words" and total number of entries for a one month period, March.

Table 8

Frequency in Use of Dolch "Ten Most Useful Words"

Student	I	you	a	and	to	the	in	we	of	be	Total Entries
1	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	13
2	69	1	20	12	67	17	17	-	2	-	70
3	12	5	1	15	5	11	-	1	-	-	25
4	5	1	11	2	4	2	4	-	1	-	27
5	12	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
6	14	1	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	11
7	7	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	25
8	16	-	12	-	1	3	1	-	-	-	20
9	4	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
10	22	3	-	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	26
11	-	2	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	7
12	7	-	1	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	5
13	1	2	3	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	8
14	5	-	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	5
15	15	-	-	1	1	4	1	-	-	-	12
16	17	1	7	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	28

As reflected in Table 7, students showed measureable growth in writing abilitlies as they used Dolch words in journal writing. The students who used Dolch "10 Most Useful Words" also displayed word acccuracy in reading journal entries aloud to the teacher.

Conclusion

Students' selection of activities in classroom learning centers indicate the sustained level of interest of this group of kindergarten students as they utilized early literacy skills. Paper and pencil materials were selected consistently by the students during independent and language work times. All students were tested on literacy skills in November and March. The findings on literacy development showed measurable gains in the areas of letter recognition, letter printing, initial consonant sound recognition, word recognition - Dolch "10 Most Useful" and color words, and writing.

As students developed the early literacy skills an increase in writing behaviors was also noted. Students showed competencies in learning about letters, consonant sounds and word recognition, as well as, applying them successfully in self-initiated writing activities. Students showed a sustained level of interest in reading and writing activities throughout the study period.

Implications

The data collected and reported in this study shows favorable results in the development of early literacy skills of kindergarteners who were immersed in a language enriched environment. This study indicates that language experience and whole language can be used effectively as methods of instruction in developing early literacy skills. Kindergartners become active

participants in language learning activities that incorporate speaking, listening, reading and writing as they contribute drawings, dictation, class books, creative stories, messages and artwork in creating a literate classroom environment.

The classroom environment and early literacy curriculum designed for this study was tested with an atypical kindergarten class; small class size, single sex, and middle to high income families. While the results were favorable for this group of students, it is recommended that this model or an equivalent model be implemented in kindergarten programs with larger class size, coeducational setting, and a range of socioeconomic levels, to verify the positive effects of language experience and whole language models in early literacy development.

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Appendix A

Developmental Considerations in the Elementary Grades

AGE	GESELL (maturational)	PIAGET (cognitive)	ERIKSON (psychosocial)
4	**EXPANSION...** • Visually on the horizon • Expansive language • Out-of-bounds behavior	**PREOPERATIONAL...** • Child bound by what child sees • Cannot yet think logically • Egocentric (rules) • Uses intuitive thought • Animistic • Literal • Centered • Importance of play • Learning through discovery • Least like adults	**INITIATIVE VS. GUILT** ⌄ **PURPOSE** Environmental Influences: Parents, family, friends
4½	**FITTING TOGETHER...** • Opposition, inconsistency • Is it real? • Nightmares, short attention span		
5	**SMOOTH...** • Focal, centered, "good" • Literal, self-limiting • Adults can do no wrong		
5½	**BREAK-UP...** • Quick mood changes: peaks & valleys • Visual & Auditory disorganization • Dawdling		
6	**SORTING OUT...** • Like to be first • Action oriented • Difficult transitions • Good ocular pursuit		
7	**INWARDIZED...** • Good listeners • Moody, depressed, quiet • Take time with work, thoughtful	**CONCRETE OPERATIONS...** • Mental action: the beginning of logical thought • Reversibility • Conservation • Seriation • Classification • Cooperation (rules)	**INDUSTRY VS. INFERIORITY** ⌄ **COMPETENCE** Environmental Influence: School
8	**EXPANSION...** • Exaggerate • Peer oriented		
9	**FITTING TOGETHER...** • Competitive • Accept responsibility • Truthful; individualistic		
10	**SMOOTH...** • Productive • Cooperative		
11	**BREAK-UP...** • Cliques, friendship shifts, loyalties • Moody	**FORMAL OPERATIONS...** • Ability to abstract • Deductive reasoning • Decentering • Codification (rules)	**IDENTITY VS. IDENTITY CONFUSION** ⌄ **FIDELITY** Environmental Influence: Peers
12	**SORTING OUT...** • Action oriented • Peer dominated		

Note: From
A Notebook for Teachers: Making Changes the Elementary Curriculum (p. 20) by Northeast Foundation for Children, 1986, Massachusetts: Northeast Foundation for Children.

Appendix B

Supplies and Equipment List for a Kindergarten Classroom

BLOCK AREA

Equipment:
- ☐ unit blocks—many sizes and shapes and enough for a whole class to build if possible
- ☐ small blocks (plain, not colored)
- ☐ wooden furniture
- ☐ people figurines—families, community workers
- ☐ animals—farm and zoo
- ☐ cars, trucks, tractors, buses, airplanes
- ☐ LEGO® blocks
- ☐ pulleys

Supplies:
- ☐ PLASTICINE® modeling material
- ☐ wire
- ☐ string
- ☐ found materials like shells, buttons, scraps of material, cardboard tubes, seeds, sticks, etc.
- ☐ pipe cleaners
- ☐ paper
- ☐ markers

Blocks Area—Outside:
- ☐ large hollow wooden blocks, wood planks, steering wheels, tires

DRAMA CORNER

Equipment:
- ☐ stove
- ☐ sink
- ☐ refrigerator
- ☐ doll bed
- ☐ dress-ups
- ☐ puppets
- ☐ curtain
- ☐ bean bags
- ☐ NERF® balls
- ☐ VELCRO® darts and board
- ☐ tables and chairs
- ☐ pots and pans
- ☐ utensils and dishes
- ☐ mirror
- ☐ dolls
- ☐ empty food cans, boxes, cartons
- ☐ props for school, doctor's office
- ☐ props for fire dept., groceries
- ☐ indoor basketball hoop

Supplies:
- ☐ paper
- ☐ clay
- ☐ small blackboards
- ☐ crayons
- ☐ markers
- ☐ pencils
- ☐ chalk
- ☐ cardboard

GAME LOFT

Equipment: (these are *not* all made available at same time)
- ☐ CONNECT FOUR® game
- ☐ checkers
- ☐ CHUTES AND LADDERS® game
- ☐ Chinese checkers
- ☐ CANDY LAND® game
- ☐ dominoes
- ☐ handmade games
- ☐ attribute block and people pieces games
- ☐ several decks of cards with large numbers
- ☐ SORRY® game
- ☐ UNO® game
- ☐ HO-HO-CHERRY-O® game
- ☐ MANCALA® game
- ☐ LOTTO® cards
- ☐ bingo

Supplies: (available so that children can make games)
- ☐ old game board
- ☐ cardboard
- ☐ dice
- ☐ index cards
- ☐ buttons
- ☐ old game markers
- ☐ spinners

SAND-WATER TABLE

Equipment:
- ☐ a solid table with good quality liner that has a drain
- ☐ a variety of sizes and shapes of spoons, cups, dishes, bottles, cans, and pans
- ☐ sponges, buckets, plastic tubing, pumps

Supplies:
- ☐ clean fine sand
- ☐ dried beans
- ☐ split peas—orange are attractive
- ☐ found materials—shells, rocks, seeds, sticks, corks, styrofoam, etc.

LIBRARY AND LISTENING CENTER

Equipment:
- ☐ variety of books including picture books with no words, easy picture books, easy readers, harder books of familiar stories or poems that have been read to the class like *Charlotte's Web*, *Mother Goose* or Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, magazines like Ranger Rick, children's individual published books, class experience books.
- ☐ 2 or 3 books a week on tape from library list that children may listen to as they look at book.

ART

Equipment:
- ☐ painting easel
- ☐ peg board for drying
- ☐ shelves for drying, storage and display
- ☐ stamps
- ☐ scissors
- ☐ brayers
- ☐ variety of brushes
- ☐ smocks
- ☐ stencils
- ☐ hole punches
- ☐ printing plates

Supplies
- ☐ markers
- ☐ CRAY-PAS® colors
- ☐ PAYONS® crayons
- ☐ variety of pencils
- ☐ clay
- ☐ ink
- ☐ variety of tapes
- ☐ candles
- ☐ string
- ☐ material
- ☐ buttons
- ☐ found materials from nature and from industry (boxes, wire, newspaper, Q-TIPS® cotton swabs, straw, cotton, old toothbrushes)
- ☐ crayons
- ☐ colored pencils
- ☐ watercolors
- ☐ pipe cleaners
- ☐ PLASTICINE® modeling material
- ☐ rulers
- ☐ pastels
- ☐ yarn
- ☐ thread
- ☐ wood pieces

MATH AND MANIPULATION AREA

Equipment:
- ☐ CUISENAIRE® rods
- ☐ attribute blocks
- ☐ number balance
- ☐ handmade games
- ☐ UNIFIX® cubes
- ☐ playing cards

DISCOVERY TABLE

Equipment:
- ☐ aquariums
- ☐ microscope
- ☐ mirrors
- ☐ various containers to hold living and nonliving
- ☐ materials, containers to grow plants in
- ☐ magnifying glasses
- ☐ magnets
- ☐ balances

Note: From
A Notebook for Teachers: Making Changes the Elementary Curriculum (p. 39) by Northeast Foundation for Children, 1986, Massachusetts: Northeast Foundation for Children.

Appendix C

Behavorial Characteristics of A Five and A Half Year Old

THE FIVE AND ONE HALF YEAR OLD—BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS

PHYSICAL	LANGUAGE	PERSONAL-SOCIAL	ADAPTIVE
• Visual and auditory confusion • Reversals common • Physically restless • Awkward fine motor • Variable pencil grasp • Tilts head to nondominant side • Hand "gets tired" from firm grip • Often stands up to do work • Tires quickly	• Equivocates—sometimes yes, sometimes no • Elaborates and differentiates in answer to questions • Verbal answers may not equal cognitive understanding; more words than ideas • Auditory reversals (answers first what was heard last)	• Oppositional, not sure whether to be good or naughty • Insecure with feelings • Testing authority, limits • Tentative • Complains • Temper tantrums: striking out • Wonderful at home, terrible at school or vice-versa	• Makes less of mistakes; recognizes some • Shows initiative • Trial and error learning • Learns well from direct experience

THE FIVE AND ONE HALF YEAR OLD—CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

Many of the characteristics of five, of course, carry over to five and a half. However, at this "break-up" stage or stage of disequilibrium certain specific implications present themselves.

Vision and Fine Motor Ability	• Printing will tend to be less neat than at five and with more reversals. • Pencil "grips" sometimes help children with overfirm grasp at this age. • Reversals of letters and numbers are at their peak; reading and writing tasks can be extremely difficult and frustrating.
Gross Motor Ability	• Children begin to need more physical activity though they do not always respond with good attention in structured gym class. • Children tire quickly, sometimes necessitating shorter work periods than at five.
Cognitive Growth	• Language still [illegible] action; children begin to explain in more detail. • Teachers need to provide many avenues for children to express what they know (i.e., blocks, games, arts and crafts). • Teachers need to allow children time to try out their own ways of doing things even when they sometimes get the wrong answers. Teachers should be constantly validating children's initiative when evident.
Personal-Social Behavior	• Consistent rules and discipline are even more necessary than at five, and because children are testing limits more, too harsh discipline, especially for mistakes, can be discouraging. • The use of frequent questioning and redirecting by the teacher works better now than at five.

Note: From
A Notebook for Teachers: Making Changes the Elementary Curriculum (p. 15) by Northeast Foundation for Children, 1986, Massachusetts: Northeast Foundation for Children.

Appendix D

Appendix D

Behavorial Characteristics of A Six Year Old

THE SIX YEAR OLD—BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS

PHYSICAL	LANGUAGE	PERSONAL-SOCIAL	ADAPTIVE
• Good ocular pursuit • More aware of hand as tool • Sloppy; in a hurry; speed is a benchmark of 6 • Noisy in classroom • Falls backwards out of chairs • Learning to distinguish left from right • Oral activity; chews pencils, bites fingernails, chews hair (teething) • Easily tires • Frequent illnesses • Enjoys out of doors; gym	• Likes to "work" • Likes to explain things • Quick to explain things • Show & tell is useful • Loves jokes & guessing games • Boisterous & enthusiastic language • Worrier; complainer • Anticipates closure in speech of others	• Wants to be first • Competitive; enthusiastic • Anxious to do well • Thrives on praise • Any failure is hard • Tremendous capacity for enjoyment • Likes surprises, treats • Wants to be good in school • Tends to be "poor sport" • Invents rules • Can be bossy, teasing • Critical of others • Easily upset when hurt • Sometimes dishonest • Friends are important (may have a best friend) • Transitions are difficult • School replaces home as most significant environmental influence	• Loves to ask questions • Likes new games; ideas • Loves to color; paint • Learns best through discovery • Enjoys process more than product • Tries more than can accomplish (eyes bigger than stomach) • Dramatic play elaborated • Cooperative play elaborated • Representative symbols more important • Spatial relationships & functional relationships better understood • Beginning understanding of past when tied closely to present • Beginning interest in skill & technique for its own sake

THE SIX YEAR OLD—CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

Six is the stage of "sorting out," of great drive and eagerness. There are many important classroom considerations.

Vision and Fine Motor Ability	• Children should do little copy work from the blackboard. While they will comply if asked, this is a difficult task at this age. • Spacing and the ability to stay on the line are difficult and performed with great inconsistency. • Tracking ability now makes reading instruction manageable.
Gross Motor Ability	• Teacher needs to allow for a busy level of noise and activity in the classroom. • Teacher should expect high volume of products but low quality of completion. Children are proud of how much work they get done, but not too concerned with how it looks. • Teachers can sometimes encourage a slower pace to enhance quality. • Teachers should pay attention to how much children delight in the doing; especially the doing for themselves, whether it be academics, clean-up or snack. Children are ready for experiments with individual and group responsibility.
Cognitive Growth	• Games of all sorts are popular and useful at this age. Language games, poems, riddles, and songs delight and illuminate the young mind. Teaching through games produces learning patterns that take root in a way that worksheet learning usually does not. • This is an age of artistic explosion. Clay, paints, coloring, book making, weaving, dancing, singing are often all tried out for the first time with seriousness at this age. Children need to be made to feel that their attempts are valued, that there is a right and wrong way to approach an art medium. Risk taking at this age enhances later artistic expression and competence. • Children can begin to understand past events (history) when they are closely associated with the present. Teachers need to plan Social Studies content with an eye to the here and now. Field trips are immensely popular and productive when followed by representational activities such as experience stories and work in the blocks.

Note: From
A Notebook for Teachers: Making Changes the Elementary Curriculum (p. 16-17) by
Northeast Foundation for Children, 1986, Massachusetts: Northeast Foundation for Children.

Appendix E

Checklist for Kindergarten Learning Environment

This check list is to be used in rating the extent to which any learning environment has visible evidence that the three strands of a language approach are being implemented. It does not deal with the nonvisible aspects of the program.

Tentative conclusions from the use of this rating scale indicate that children who live and learn in an environment with a rating above 3.0 make significant progress toward communication abilities that promote reading and writing.

THE SCORING SCALE

0-- *Does not exist* at the time of observation
1-- *Present* but on a restricted basis-by permission only or after completion of "regular work"
2-- *Present during observation period* but little or no evidence as a continuing part of the program.
3-- *Present during observation* with visible evidence that the condition is a continuing part of the program.
4-- *Superior performance of part observed* and/or visible evidence that the condition is an essential part of the program

OBSERVATION TIME

Minimum of 30 minutes recommended for external evaluation.
No time limit for self-evaluation.

SUMMARY:

Mean score Strand One
Mean Score Strand Two
Mean Score Strand Three
TOTAL Mean scores divided by 3

INTERPRETATION

The closer the *total score* is to 4.00, the nearer the classroom envirnment is to satisfying basic requirements for a language experience approach.

Scores below 3.00 reflect a need for improvement in communication opportunities that are required of a language experience approach.

Note: From
Language Experiences in Communication (pp. 485-488) by Allen, R., 1876.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

STRAND ONE
Experiencing Communication

MAJOR IDEA
This strand emphasizes the real language of the learners as basic to communication skill development

Superior performance of part observed. Essential part of program.	
Present during observation. Continuing part of program	
Present during observation. Not a continuing part	
Present but on a restricted basis	
Did not exist at time of observation	0

ITEMS TO BE CHECKED

	0	1	2	3	4
1. Is there obvious opportunity for each child to participate comfortably with home-rooted language when talking to "share" with the group?					
2. Is the real language of the children used as part of the room environment through dictated stories and books?					
3. Are children free from the fear of using incorrect language?					
4. Is space and time provided for children to express their ideas with many media?					
5. Is space and time provided for children to participate in puppetry, dramatization, and pantomime?					
6. Are there adequate tactile and visual models available for naming, describing, and discussing?					
7. Do children have opportunity to listen to their own language recorded on tape?					
8. Is there opportunity for children to respond rhymically to music?					
9. Do children dictate, observe the writing, and illustrate books that are useful in the classroom?					
10. Do children have opportunities to respond to meanings in their environment not represented by symbol systems-weather, color, shape, size, texture, emotion, sound, motion?					
Raw score totals					

TOTAL RAW SCORE _____

Mean score (raw score divided by 10) _____

STRAND TWO
Studying communication

MAJOR IDEA
This strand emphasizes an understanding of how language works for individuals.

	0	1	2	3	4
Superior performance of part observed. Essential part of program.					
Present during observation. Continuing part of program					
Present during observation. Not a continuing part					
Present but on a restricted basis					
Did not exist at time of time observation					
ITEMS TO BE CHECKED					
1. Are children encouraged to "read" and respond to their environment through their sense-hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, and seeing?					
2. Are children given the opportunity to learn to nonalphabetic symbols in in clocks, maps, numerals, graphs, and calendars?					
3. Do children engage in conversations to discuss topics such as names of letters, words, and sentences?					
4. Are children acquiring vocabularies of names of things, words of action, and words in many descriptive categories?					
5. Is vocabulary being extended through teacher modeling, mediating, and offering alternatives?					
6. Is there obvious emphasis on developing an awareness of words of highest frequency?					
7. Are alternatives offered to children whose natural speech is characterized by gross errors?					
8. Do children respond to language structures such as rhyming, beginning sounds, and predictive sentence patterns?					
9. Do children have opportunities to identify labels and other words in printed form?					
10. Do children have time and place to explore writing by tracing, copying, and writing independently?					
Raw score totals					

TOTAL RAW SCORE _____

Mean score (raw score divided by 10) _____

STRAND THREE

Relating communication of self to others

MAJOR IDEA

This strand emphasizes the fluency of the language and ideas of many people on the personal language of children.

	0	1	2	3	4
Superior performance of part observed. Essential part of program.					
Present during observation. Continuing part of program					
Present during observation. Not a continuing part					
Present but on a restricted basis					
Did not exist at time of observation					

ITEMS TO BE CHECKED

1. Are many types of books available for browsing and reading together?
2. Are stories and poems read *to* and *with* children every day?
3. Are films and filmstrips used to bring children in contact with the language and ideas of others?
4. Do children have access to records and tapes that accompany books?
5. Do children have opportunity to repeat words, phrases, and sentences of other authors as they listen to reading of language that is different from their home-rooted language?
6. Do children have opportunity to add to the ideas of others as they listen to stories and poems?
7. Are art prints, musical compositions, photographs, and other creative materials available for personal interpretation with personal language?
8. Are choral readings, fingerplays, songs, and rhymes, a part of the language program to bring children in contact with others' language?
9. Do children have the opportunity to look in a variety of places for information on the same topic?
10. Do children have opportunity to evaluate communication of others- real from imaginary, fact from fantasy, poetry from prose?

Raw score totals

TOTAL RAW SCORE

Mean score (raw score divided by 10)

Appendix F

Language Experience Story - Ideas About Dinosaurs

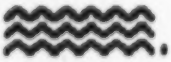
Ideas About Dinosaurs

...Some eat .

...Some are big .

...Some are small .

...Some eat meat.

...Some swim  .

...They have and babies hatch out of them.

...Some fly.

1-12-88

Appendix G

Developmental Spelling Test, R. Gentry

Words	Pre-communicative	Semi-phonetic	Phonetic spellings	Transition spellings	Correct
1. monster	0	mtr	mostr	monstur	0
2. united	0	u	unitid	younighted	0
3. dress	0	jrs	jres	dres	0
4. bottom	0	bt	bodm	bottum	0
5. hiked	0	h	hikt	hicked	0
6. human	0	um	humm	humum	0
7. eagle	0	el	egl	egul	0
8. closed	0	kd	klosd	clossed	0
9. bumped	0	b	bopt	bumpped	0
10. type	0	tp	tip	tipe	0

1. monster - The boy was eaten by a *monster.*
2. united - You live in the *United* States.
3. dress - The girl wore a new *dress.*
4. bottom - A big fish lives in the *bottom* of the lake.
5. hiked - We *hiked* to the top of the mountain.
6. human - Miss Piggy is not a *human.*
7. eagle - An *eagle* is a powerful bird.
8. closed - The girl *closed* the door.
9. bumped - The car *bumped* into the bus.
10. type - *Type* the letter on the typewriter.

Note: From
"YOU Can Analyze Developmental Spelling - And Here's How To Do It" by Gentry, R., Early Years, 15(9), 1985, pp. 44-5.

Appendix H

Additional References and Suggested Readings

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